

### Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended): A method for forming individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers comprising the steps of:
  - applying an effective amount of a crosslinking agent in the presence of an effective amount of a polyol to a mat of cellulosic fibers,
  - separating the mat into substantially individualized fibers, drying the treated individualized fibers,
  - curing the crosslinking agent in the presence of the polyol to form individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers,
  - wherein said curing occurs at a temperature from about 160° C to about 215 ° C ; andwherein the Whiteness Index, (WI<sub>(CDM-L)</sub>), of the individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers is greater than about 69.0.
2. (Original): The method of Claim 1 wherein the crosslinking agent is an  $\alpha$ -hydroxy polycarboxlic acid.
3. (Original): The method of Claim 2 wherein the crosslinking agent is selected from the group consisting of malic acid, tartaric acid, citric acid, tartronic acid,  $\alpha$ -hydroxyglutaric acid, and citramalic acid and mixtures thereof.
4. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 3 wherein the crosslinking agent is citric acid.
5. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 3 wherein the crosslinking agent is malic acid.
6. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is selected from the group consisting of acyclic polyols, alicyclic polyols and heterosides and mixtures thereof.
7. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 6 wherein the acyclic polyol is selected from the group consisting of erythritol, xylitol, arabinitol, ribitol, sorbitol, mannitol, perseitol, and volemitol and mixtures thereof.
8. (Previously presented): The method of claim 7 wherein the acyclic polyol is sorbitol.

9. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 6 wherein the alicyclic polyol is myo-Inositol.

10. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 6 wherein the heteroside is selected from the group consisting of isomalt, lactitol, and maltitol or mixtures thereof.

11. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 10 wherein the heteroside is maltitol.

12 (Previously presented): The method of claim 10 wherein the heteroside is lactitol.

13. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is applied to the cellulose mat before the application of the crosslinking agent.

14. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is applied to the crosslink treated individualized fibers before curing.

15 (New): The method of Claim 1 wherein said curing occurs at a temperature from about 170°C to about 215°C.

16. ( New): The method of Claim 1 wherein said curing occurs at a temperature from about 182°C to about 215°C.

17. (New): The method of Claim 1 wherein said curing occurs at a temperature from about 193°C to about 215°C.